S
363.6909786
H6M
NOV/DEC
1981

PLEASE RETURN

Montana State Library
3 0864 1005 8678 6

SHELVED V
PERIODICALS

DEC 2 6 1981

MONTANA STATE LIBRARY
930 E Lyndale Ave.
Helena, Montana 59601

Supplement to Montana Post

MONTANA POST

PRESERVATION

November-December 1981 — 2 — Montana State Historic Preservation Office

In this issue of Preservation

Consider this issue of the *Post Preservation* supplement a coupon. No, it does not entitle you to grant dollars or rebates. But it does offer any of you interested in preservation a catalog of services, information, and assistance available to help you in your effort. Within the issue, you will find a description of newly passed, substantial federal tax incentives; data about preservation organizations and publications which provide technical help; a bibliography of books, pamphlets, and brochures containing concrete information on solving maintenance and rehabilitation questions; and the first of a series of short articles on preservation questions facing the old-house owner. In short, this is something like a service magazine's "how to" article, a "fifty ways to accomplish preservation in a world without federal grant dollars."

We do not present this information as a form of sour grapes, or as a reflection of our half-hearted attempts to see preservation function without grant dollars. Federal dollars have never been singularly responsible for preserving Montana's wealth of interesting older properties and sites. In the heyday of federal historic preservation funding, Montana received only $400,000 in a given year for building rehabilitation. Last year, nine rehab projects shared $110,000.

Preservation was and is meant to be the expression of public and private interest in a specific area's heritage. Because most preservation work (though clearly not all) returns or keeps older properties in active, productive, economic use, that activity should not need substantial grant support. There are, in fact, some real dangers in relying too heavily on grant support. Grant dependence may make it difficult to look realistically at a project's financial return, at potential occupants and at creative sources of supplies.

So, we present this list of preservation sources, assistance, and information because they exist and because knowing about them will keep us from trying to "reinvent the wheel." More important, these sources should be far more widely used in Montana than they are now. Very few states or cities have our special collection of resources, but they have pioneered many ways to make preservation work more feasible.

The list begins with our telephone number: (406) 449-4584 and our address: State Historical Preservation Office, Montana Historical Society, 225 North Roberts, Helena 59620. Our staff consists of an architect, an archaeologist, an historian, an architectural historian, and a secretary. Our phone currently rings about 50 times a day; we welcome that contact and more. It's our only way to know about the properties, the dreams, the threats, the questions, and the interests inherent in any active preservation effort. When you call, in addition to listening, we are very glad to supply you with more detailed tax form; photocopy pertinent literature; or call another state or federal office for consultation for you; or just plain talk through your question. What follows is an introduction to that kind of service.

Marcella Sherfy

Caring for older properties

Character & choices

One owner's choice to utilize an existing bay window rather than cut through a wall to provide a new doorway has altered the character of this historic building.

Whatever the State Preservation Office's usual optimism and advocacy, we recognize that owners of older properties face a variety of choices and dilemmas. Considering any change to an older building requires an owner to weigh the value of the historic qualities of the property against the need, impact, and nature of modernization. Usually the choices are not black and white; dollars do not always equal preferences.

In recognition of those dilemmas, this article begins a series that will address questions facing owners of older properties. Articles on specific problems such as wooden windows, insulation and the use of porches are being planned. But in this first issue, we want to set the stage with the general premises that should govern decisions about treating historic properties.

Like people, older properties have character. We consider character of an older property a positive attribute, reflecting both its uniqueness and its market value. The first step in a rehabilitation project should be to define what gives your particular older property character.

Just as a person's character reflects the experiences of his past, so too does the older property bear the imprint of its original owner and subsequent occupants. The basic character is shaped at the time of construction, reflecting the tastes and economic status of the builder. A building's evolution, including all changes from completion to the present, is evidence of its history and development and each change should be evaluated for its relation to the entire building. And too, as an individual's personality is affected by those who surround him, the older building needs to be considered in the context of its neighbors. Often the attractiveness of a particular building stems from a special identity that is the result of its collective appearance.

The romance of owning an older property is partly attributable to the link it provides us with the past. I can now speak from experience rather than theory, for as the recent purchaser of an older house, I have quickly developed an attachment to three of the former owners. The first is the wealthy widow who built the house and landscaped the lawns with plants from the conservatory she operated. The second owners were two miserly sisters who ran a luncheonette and

Montana Post *Preservation* is published quarterly as a supplement to *Montana Post* by the State Historic Preservation Office, Montana Historical Society, 225 N. Roberts, Helena 59620. Funds for this publication are provided by the State of Montana and the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

Character & choices

divided portions of the house to rent out, all the while hoarding away $100,000 in their safe deposit box. I now feel that the fragile reminders of themselves that they have passed on to me are almost as significant in my planned rehabilitation as the carved stair balustrade and the fine stone masonry work, which represent the first owners. Nonetheless, like many of you, I have to make my 2600 historic square feet affordable and useable. That's a perplexing undertaking for all of us.

The destruction of the character of older properties is usually unintentional. We are daily barraged with television commercials, newspaper ads, and sales pitches touting miracle cures and wonder products. But synthetic siding (steel, aluminum, and vinyl) for example, is no longer recognized universally as the solution to exterior maintenance problems. Besides destroying architectural details and proportions, the synthetic siding can trap moisture within the walls causing structural deterioration. Meanwhile, in the name of energy conservation, lean-to greenhouses are appearing on the fronts of historic homes and windows are being blocked down to accommodate lowered ceilings. The list goes on and on.

The planning of a rehabilitation project should begin with two basic precepts. First, respect all architectural details. These details are reflections of the craftsmanship of an earlier time; they provide a sense of individuality in our mass-production world. Second, take the time to insure that changes you make are reversible. Future owners' needs will be different than yours, just as yours differ from previous owners'.

Advice on how to preserve the architectural integrity of your building without sacrificing practicality is available from the State Historic Preservation Office. Often the alternatives are no more expensive, and the long-term benefits can be great.

Lon Johnson

Two views of neighborhoods (above) show how identical house styles have been modified by different owners in quite different ways—as they made their own choices about how to use, improve, adapt, and maintain the buildings. Below, two examples show the kinds of architectural details that shape the character of older buildings, in the gingerbread trim of a porch and the carved-lintel window treatment.

Above, left and right, identical buildings in the same neighborhood illustrate how one owner has decided to update his building. The use of a contrasting color of paint has been used to great advantage to highlight the trim and details of the building on the right. However, the addition of the sun porch on the second story in not sympathetic to the original architectural design.

Three different Montana properties, each with its own character: left, Smelter Hill in Great Falls; right top, International style in Helena; right bottom, a cottage in Basin.

A sampling of helpful organizations, publications

The following is a list of organizations and publications useful to those interested in maintaining and rehabilitating older houses and businesses. The list is in no way complete, but was compiled from those we find most often referenced.

The Montana Historical Society is the place to start when researching the history of your older property. Photo archives, Sanborn insurance maps, and other library resources can tell you about your property's earlier appearances.

The State Historic Preservation Office is a division of the Montana Historical Society, but has specific people, resources, and files of interest to the owner of older property. We can provide technical assistance in a wide variety of areas and we maintain a collection of brochures that are available upon request. A sampling of the titles available include:

"Conserving Energy in Historic Buildings."

"Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning."

"Aluminum and Vinyl Sidings on Historic Buildings."

"The Repair of Wooden Windows."

"Storefront Rehabilitation."

We also maintain copies of one-of-a-kind and larger, more expensive publications that you may look over in our office, or we can provide you with ordering instructions. Some are federal government publications; others are private:

"Access to Historic Buildings for the Disabled."

"Main Street Historic Districts: Rehab Guidelines."

"Pressed Tin Ceilings."

"Solutions for Exterior Paint Problems."

The National Trust for Historic Preservation provides members with a monthly newsletter, *Preservation News,* and a bi-monthly magazine, *Historic Preservation.* Full-length original articles on all aspects of historic preservation, book reviews, descriptions of products and services, and classified ads listing historic properties for sale. NTHP, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The Association for Preservation Technology publishes quarterly a scholarly bulletin. Preservation and restoration technology, technical information. APT, Box 2487, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5W6, Canada.

The Old-House Journal is a down-to-earth, do-it-yourself monthly publication addressing the practical rehabilitation of older houses. Restoration and maintenance techniques, products, helpful publications, classified ads. OHJ, 69A Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217.

The Victorian Society in America provides members with a quarterly magazine, *Nineteenth Century.* Articles feature Victorian-related architecture, interior design, and preservation techniques. The Victorian Society in America, East Washington Square, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106.

New tax incentives in effect

Since passage of the Tax Reform Act of 1976, federal tax incentives have stimulated the private investment of over $5 million in the rehabilitation of more than 20 historic properties in Montana. From Billings, where an automobile showroom was rehabilitated to provide office space, to Columbia Falls, where a vacant church now houses chiropractic offices, the tax incentives have been directly responsible for providing the economic edge necessary to insure the continued life of several historic properties.

The Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981, signed into law August 13, makes dramatic and sweeping revisions to the Tax Reform Act of 1976. These changes are recognized by tax experts as providing a veritable "Gold Mine" to investors and owners considering major rehabilitation of historic buildings. The benefits should surpass the immediate financial gain reaped by a few individuals as entire neighborhoods and business districts are favorably affected by the investment in certain historic buildings.

The new law, effective January 1, 1982, provides a 25 per cent investment tax credit (ITC) for the "qualified rehabilitation" of a "certified historic structure." The ITC may be combined with a straight-line depreciation to recover rehabilitation cost over 15 years. The owner is not required to deduct the ITC from the qualified costs to be depreciated.

A "certified historic structure" is any building listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places, or a building located in a Registered Historic District if it is identified by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Park Service (NPS) as contributing to the significance of the district. One additional qualification is that the structure must be used for income-producing purposes: commercial, industrial, or residential rental.

A "qualified rehabilitation" must meet two tests. First, there must be a "substantial rehabiliation." This means that the rehabilitation expenditures must exceed the greater of $5000 or the adjusted basis of the property (cost of the building plus capital improvements, less depreciation), with a 24-month period. The law provides an alternative 60-month period to meet the substantial rehabilitation test if the work is set forth in phases outlined in architectural plans completed *before* the rehabilitation begins.

The second requirement is that the work must be a "certified rehabilitation." To meet that requirement, the proposed work must be reviewed by the SHPO and the NPS and be determined to be consistent with the historic character of the building or the district in which the building is located.

The State Historic Preservation Office acts as the liaison between the building owner and the National Park Service in reviewing both the historic significance of the property and the proposed or completed rehabilitation work. The property owner is responsible for completing the two-part "Historic Preservation Certification Application" which is available from the SHPO. The SHPO strongly urges that the application be completed prior to the initiation of the rehabilitation work so that any potential problems which could lead to denial of certification can be identified.

The law also includes a 15 per cent investment tax credit for building 30 years and older, or a 20 per cent investment tax credit for buildings 40 years and older, either of which can be combined with a 15-year straight-line depreciation. Unlike the certified rehabilitation of an historic structure, however, the law requires that the tax credit be subtracted from the total rehabilitation costs in computing the amount to be depreciated. These lesser credits apply only to commercial and industrial buildings and not to residential rental buildings. Review by the SHPO and the NPS is required for buildings that are listed in the National Register or within a registered Historic District.

Additional provisions and regulations in the new law should be carefully considered by the property owner and his tax attorney or accountant.

Montana State Historic Preservation Office

Marcella Sherfy - Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer; Historian
Lon Johnson - Historical Architect
Patricia Bick - Architectural Historian
Diana Vanek - Archaeologist/Anthropologist
Denise Thiel - Secretary

Historic preservation grant status

Montana's chances of receiving federal fiscal year 1982 historic preservation fund monies are looking better. But, the final decisions still haven't been made at the federal level.

As of mid-November, final Congressional approval of the Department of Interior budget, which contains the appropriation figures for the historic preservation monies we use for administrative and regrant purposes, had not occurred. But Congressional actions to date bode well. Both the House and Senate are on record approving 26.5 million dollars for historic preservation, of which $21.9 is slated for allocation to state historic preservation programs like ours. However, that money is restricted to use in non-construction work. Hence, assuming final Congressional approval of the present Department of Interior budget, Presidential signing, and no subsequent rescission action, Montana should be receiving about $250,000 for the fiscal year that began October 1, 1981. Survey and planning grants can be made from that allocation to Montana projects.

Who should receive SHPO's '81 awards? (Part II)

In the fall issue of the *Post Preservation* supplement we asked for your suggestions of candidates for the 1981 Historic Preservation Awards. We also indicated that those awards would be presented during the Montana History Conference, held the first week of October. However, for a variety of reasons, the newsletter seeking your suggestions was not mailed to you until after the date by which we needed candidates' names. So, we have not yet selected 1981 award winners and we made no formal presentations during the History Conference. Instead, we postponed making the selection until our next Preservation Review Board meeting scheduled for mid-January 1982.

This awards program is designed to recognize and publicize sound, creative preservation work regardless of whether public money or public processes were involved. It is not officially linked with the grants program or National Register of Historic Places activity handled by the Preservation office.

Awards will be given in two categories — to people or organizations, and to specific rehabilitation projects and the people responsible for them. The first award honors those whose work, in rehabilitation, survey, writing or organizing, has been especially effective in broadening and educating community interest in preservation. The projects category recognizes rehabilitation work that is innovative, sound, and economically productive.

The Preservation Office needs brief suggestions of people or projects for these awards, rather than lengthy nominations. To suggest a candidate, please send a short description of the activities or project to Dr. Robert Archibald, Director, Montana Historical Society, before January 8, 1982.

Update on nominations to Register

The moratorium on nominating privately owned property to the National Register is about to be lifted. For the past year, the Department of Interior, National Park Service, did not accept nominations of privately held property while they wrote and received necessary approval of new regulations on the nomination process. Those regulations specifically address how an owner's concurrence in Register listing will be sought. But that long regulation-writing process is slated to end by December. Since all nominations must be considered by our Preservation Review Board (a group of preservationists appointed by the Governor) prior to our forwarding of them to the Department of Interior, we will plan to hold a Review Board meeting in mid-January. By that time, we will have seen the final Register regulations and had an opportunity to act on the time tables they establish for owner notice and concurrence.